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DOWN THE EUPHRATES VALLEY. III.

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Dêr, with its numerous bazaars and cafés, and its comparatively comfortable khans and Turkish baths, is a very desirable resting-place for travellers in the Euphrates valley. Hence it was with much regret that we took our leave on December 24th (1888). Between Dêr and the next station, Meyâdin, nine hours and fifteen minutes distant, there are very few points of interest. Before reaching Meyâdin, one can see in the distance the ruins of Rahaba. Some of the party rode direct to these ruins, which have been so well described by Sachau in his *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, p. 279 sqq. Rahaba is situated on the eastern edge of a large isolated plateau. On the east it falls rapidly to the plain of the Euphrates, while on the west a deep trench has been cut in order to separate it from the main portion of the plateau. Sachau gives its height as 250 feet. These figures are too high. The walls, both outer and inner, are well preserved. They are built of huge blocks of gypsum and burnt bricks, the latter predominating. The outer walls are strengthened by quadrangular towers placed at short distances from each other, similar to those on the walls on the north side of Halibiyyeh, but much smaller. These ruins are evidently Arabic, or at least they have been occupied by Arabs, as Sachau remarks that on one of the walls on the west side he found an Arabic inscription in Kûfi characters. At the time of his visit it was no longer legible. I was not able to find this inscription because of the approaching darkness. Late in the evening, after having taken about a dozen photographs, we started for Meyâdin, 30 minutes to E. N. E., to which place our caravan had been ordered. The night was dark and cold, the plain was rough because of the numerous irrigating canals, and both riders and horses were very tired. We had some difficulty in picking our way, and, even after reaching the village, we could not find our quarters. Luckily, we met some good-natured Arabs, and they guided us to the Serai, where we found the caravan and the other members of the party.

The chief chamber of the Serai was placed at our disposal, but we found it already occupied by bats and fleas. The former—the latter also—were present in great numbers, and they made sleep impossible. In addition to these troubles, our dinner (?) was very poor; and my canvas bed broke down before I had fairly crept into it, and hence I was obliged to sleep on the ground, which was very cold and damp. In fact, our recollections of this place were such that, on the return trip in May, 1889, we pitched our tents without the city walls, and did not even enter the city to pay our respects to our former host. Meyâdin had, according to Sachau (1880), 1,000 houses. It is much larger now, and presents a prosperous appearance. There are a great many new bazaars, at which the necessities of life, i. e. for an Arab, can be purchased. It lies on a narrow arm of the Euphrates, which is separated from the main river by a

small island covered with tamarisks. This canal is fordable—it was so in May—and the people of the village obtain their fuel from the island. There are also several date-palms here, the first to be seen in the Euphrates valley.

On Christmas morning, at 5.10, we left Meyâdin, and the caravan arrived at Salâhiyyeh at 3.50 p. m., i. e. after ten hours and forty minutes. About 10 a. m. we saw a party of Arabs dancing their war-dance. They did not, however, make any attempt to attack us. One hour (caravan time) on this side of Salâhiyyeh is an old ruin called Khan Kalessi—or according to Chesney, Lady Anne Blunt,* and others, Salâhiyyeh. If the latter is correct, the name of the Turkish barracks further on has been taken from these ruins. Cf. also Abû-Hariri, which has taken its name from the ruins fifteen minutes distant from it. These ruins are situated to the north of a gypsum plateau on the very edge of the west bank of the Euphrates. They are rectangular in form. The walls are built of gypsum, and are fairly well preserved. The streets are wide and at right angles. The most interesting part of these ruins is the large wall to the south facing the Euphrates. It is, perhaps, half a mile long, 15-25 ft. high, and 6-10 ft. broad. It is strengthened by 10-12 very high towers. It is best, with Lady Blunt, to regard these as ruins of a fortress which formerly guarded a caravan road to the Euphrates.

After a forced ride of 15-20 minutes, we reached the barracks of Salâhiyyeh. There was only one small room at our disposal, and we were seven in number. Notwithstanding the cold, Mr. Field and I pitched a tent at some distance from the barracks, and spent a sleepless Christmas night, being kept awake by the cries of the jackals, who stuck their noses into our tent, and whiffed the air in a way that was not conducive to sleep.

* "We had two or three hours to-day of desert, and passed the ruins of Salâhiyyeh, a town of the same date, and much the same size, as Rakka. It has a fine gate in the middle of the west front, called "Bab esh-sham," the Syrian gate. Salâhiyyeh was probably the town where the Damascus road formerly branched off from the Euphrates." *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, p. 111 sq.